

60 years of
ART FOR ALL
The Toledo Museum of Art

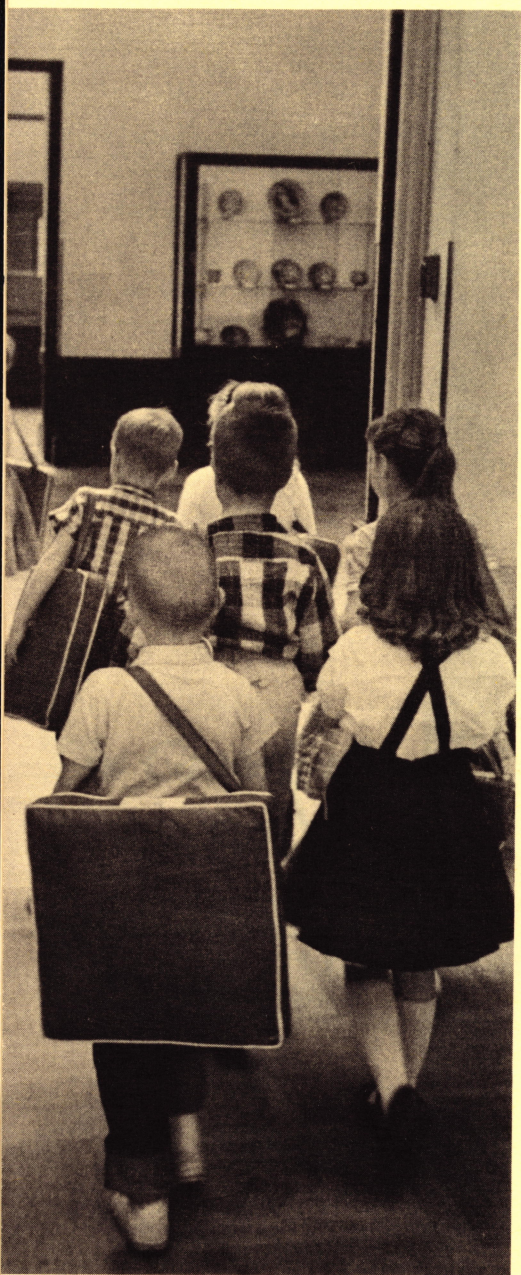
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*The Growth of
Toledo's
Art Museum
1901-1961*



60 years of
ART FOR ALL
The Toledo Museum of Art

By OTTO WITTMANN, *Director*



The following address was given at a meeting of the Rotary Club of Toledo in the Toledo Museum of Art, September 11, 1961. It is printed by the Trustees of The Toledo Museum of Art, 1961.

WELCOME TO THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART. I want to do three things today. First, since we are 60 years old this year, I would like to review with you the reasons why the Museum started, and why and how it grew.

Secondly, to report to you on the status of the Art Museum today—what we do, how we rank, how we serve the community, what are our successes problems,—and third, I would like to share with you our hopes and predictions for the future.

Two days ago, last Saturday, almost 5,000 children and adults came to the Art Museum. Many of you know (because you, your wives or children were here) that Saturday was the greatest day of the year for us here at the Art Museum — Registration Day for Children's Classes. We will end up with an enrollment of slightly over 2400 children. But this year there may be some on the waiting list whom we will not be able to accommodate. We are reaching our physical capacity.

Tomorrow, Toledo area adults will begin to register for art classes, and by the end of this week almost 1,000 adults will have enrolled for regularly scheduled art and music classes. The Museum is truly a cultural center for this community — a veritable magnet for visitors who come every year from every State in our Union, and from approximately 40 to 45 foreign countries.

Yes, we have come a long way in 60 years.

Our talk today is in the nature of a talk to stockholders. Each of you in this room, and many others, are stockholders. And, like our Toledo Companies, we are proud of our Board of Directors (our Trustees), and of our top executives. Some of them are with us today, and I would like to take this opportunity to introduce them to you.

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Trustees:

Harry E. Collin, President; J. P. Levis, Vice-President; Blake-More Godwin, Vice-President; W. Sinclair Walbridge, Secretary; Richard R. Johnston, Treasurer; John D. Biggers, Chairman, Executive Committee; Ralph E. Carpenter, John K. Davis, William C. Draper, LeRoy E. Eastman, James P. Falvey, George M. Jones, Jr., Judge Frank L. Kloebe, Robert G. Landers, Jules D. Lippmann, Carroll L. Proctor, George W. Ritter, Carl B. Spitzer, Ford R. Weber.

Museum Staff:

Millard F. Rogers, Jr., Assistant to the Director; William Hutton, Assistant Curator; Rudolf M. Riefstahl, Assistant Curator; Charles F. Gunther, Supervisor of Art Education; William J. Gravesmill, Supervisor of Music; George F. Hartman, Jr., Administrative Assistant; Leonard Urbanski, Accountant; Kenneth H. Brockseker, Superintendent.

We will deal today with history, with fixed assets, with public reaction, and old and new markets. For instance, we have a plant that is in marvelous shape, but which is in an area that demands some attention. We have problems — everybody has problems, and in this respect we are certainly not alone. They are concerned with politics and government; with personnel; with the growth pattern of our city; with inflation; with investments and the yield therefrom; and in the course of these remarks I hope also to say something about art.

The Museum's History

But first I want to talk about the background of the Museum. The Art Museum was founded on April 18, 1901, by Edward Drummond Libbey and a group of Toledo citizens. There were only a handful of museums in all of our country at that time. Today there are more than 4500 museums in America.

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The Museum was incorporated as a non-profit, educational institution, named The Toledo Museum of Art — a name it still bears even though several times the community tried to name it The Libbey Museum, out of gratitude to Mr. Libbey for what he had done. He flatly refused, saying that this was a museum for the community, not a monument to one man. Later in that same year, 1901, about 120 people came together and agreed to become members of the Museum. Each member paid \$10. Membership today is still \$10, the only thing I know that you can buy today for the same price as in 1901.

Today we have about 3600 members. We are very proud of the fact that 67% of Rotarians are members of the Art Museum, many carrying higher categories of membership than the \$10 Active Membership.

At the Museum's first Annual Meeting in 1902 the Treasurer listed assets of: \$285 in cash; one desk valued at \$15; one lamp; and the last item, Art — none. The other day one of the County officials in a hearing at the Court-house referred to the museum as "a hundred million dollar institution," and we didn't care to challenge the figure.

At the first Annual Meeting Mr. Libbey, who had been elected president of the Museum, said ". . . it is my opinion that the object of our institution (the education in and cultivation of art) can find no better field than in our public schools."

Now this does not sound revolutionary to us today, but you must set it against the statement of the Metropolitan Museum in New York, made three years later, in 1905. "Any teacher with not more than six pupils for whose conduct he or she would be responsible, might be admitted upon application to the Metropolitan Museum."

The young Museum didn't get very far in its first two years, and then in 1903 several things happened. Mr. Lib-

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bey persuaded George W. Stevens to become the first Director of the Museum. He procured an old two-storey frame house at 13th and Madison for the Museum's first home, and the first educational programs were given in that year. The Museum about this time got its first art — a painting of sheep by the Dutch artist, Steelinck; and an Egyptian mummy of a cat. We still have both.

The Museum began to grow because it began to serve — children and adults. George Stevens and his wife, Nina Stevens, soon had so many children's classes coming to the Museum that they had to keep some of the classes walking around the block outside the building until they could get the other classes out of the small frame house.

From that time on the pattern was set. Mr. Libbey's original idea of working with children proved popular; and so did Mr. Stevens' idea — that before the young museum could have art of its own, it had to educate the children and adults of the community in art. Children and education became two basic components of the Museum long before this building existed, and before there was a collection — and long before any other museum in the United States or Europe ever thought about such ideas.

The history of the Museum from that time on is a story of growth, often slow and painful, always adventuresome and exhilarating, and conveniently marked by the milestones of the Museum's growing buildings. Within a few years the old frame house was hopelessly inadequate, and in 1912 the first part of the building in which we are today was opened. It was built with funds donated by Toledoans, matched by Mr. Libbey, and on the site of Mrs. Libbey's father's house, which she donated. Additions to this building were opened in 1926 and in 1933, the last addition tripling the size of the 1926 building. Mr. Libbey did not live to see the opening of the 1926 addition, but left his

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entire residuary estate to the growing Museum. His wife, Florence Scott Libbey, devoted her energies and her resources to the development of music and art education.

The Museum has had a remarkable continuity. It has had only 7 presidents, and only 3 directors. The Presidents were: Mr. Libbey, Mr. Arthur J. Secor (who gave his entire collection of art to the Museum), Mr. William A. Gosline, Mr. C. Justus Wilcox, Mr. James Bentley, Mr. John D. Biggers, and presently, Mr. Harry E. Collin.

In 1926 the Museum's first Director was succeeded by Mr. Blake-More Godwin, who had been his assistant; and I, who served under Mr. Godwin for 13 years, became the Museum's third Director three years ago.

During the '20's there occurred two other important events which were to affect the Museum's future. First, Mr. Libbey, who left his residuary estate in trust for the Museum, directed in his will that no more than 50% of the income could be used for operation and maintenance of the Museum, and that all the rest must be used for the acquisition of works of art. He well knew that a Museum which stops collecting is a static museum, a dead storage, an art morgue, and he was determined that this would not happen to Toledo.

Secondly, as early as 1921, the Art Museum offered art courses for Toledo University credit. We are proud of that long and continuing association with Toledo's great university, now so ably directed by President William Carlson. Today we still offer here at the Museum all the courses in art for the University. The University, by that very fact, has available at the Museum unparalleled art facilities. University of Toledo students can proudly say that no other university students in the United States have such headquarters for an art department as this. No students have greater masterpieces at their disposal, few have a better

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specialized art library than the Museum's, and few have better studio and classroom facilities. All this is made available to about 500 university students each year on a less-than-half-cost basis.

Well, that, briefly, is how the Museum started and how it developed. Like so many successful business enterprises, it was the result of a basically simple idea — free art education for children, and a real desire to serve all the community. It was the idea of one man, Mr. Libbey, who like most successful men was able to surround himself with capable and effective associates who could make the idea grow and flower. As a matter of fact, you might say that this Museum has been the IBM of the museum world. It has grown from zero, in 1901, to be one of the top ten art museums in the United States.

Today's Operaiton

Now what about our operation today? Basically, we still follow the same fundamental concepts. But our operations and problems are much different and vastly more complex than those of the early days in the little frame house at 13th and Madison.

Today, instead of one instructor (the wife of George Stevens), we have a faculty of 20. Instead of a frame house, we have a building covering 3 acres, with 8 acres of floor space. We have a staff of almost 60 full-time employees, and another 25 part-time. We have an annual attendance which averages about the same as Toledo's population year in and year out — the highest per capita attendance of any museum in the United States except for Washington's National Gallery, where tourists swell their figure.

Of this annual attendance (and this year it will reach about 350,000), about 50% are children, 50% adults. We

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figure that about one out of every two of these comes to the Museum for some scheduled activity, either a class, a concert, or a lecture. A great part of this is group activity — children coming as a school class, or adults coming with a club or social group, or for a regularly-scheduled class in art or music.

But there is also, year in and year out, one of every two who just seem to come to the Museum. These are the casual visitors, the families who drop in on Sundays, the adults who come to enjoy an exhibition or to see again their favorite pictures, the visitors from far away, and best of all, proud Toledoans bringing their out-of-town guests to see Toledo's most beautiful asset.

New Methods

What do we do to attract them? First and foremost, of course, is the art in the Art Museum. The way in which the art is shown is of great importance. Showmanship is vital today, and it is significant that not a single picture in this Museum is where it was 15 years ago. We are constantly developing new ways to show works of art, regrouping and reorganizing the collection so that it tells its story better. Fifteen years ago, pictures and decorative arts were shown separately. Now we are putting them together to recreate the feeling of an entire age, by combining furniture, porcelain, pictures, sculpture, of the same century and country.

Much can be learned from art. One man goes through an art gallery — the paintings upon the wall look down upon him — they are mute, lifeless, without meaning. Another man goes through the same gallery — the paintings look down upon him — they speak and sing through the centuries and across the seas. The difference is in knowing.

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Art, comparable to literature, is our greatest teacher. We can take the Elizabethan period which comes down to us in Shakespeare, Marlow, and Ben Jonson, and that teaches us how people thought and wrote. But you have to see the art of that period to see how they lived.

I can point to the painting of Catherine Howard, the young queen of 21, doomed as this picture was painted, to be beheaded. I defy anyone to stand before it and not re-live the history of that period. One man may see in it the fine points of technical excellence of the artist, Holbein. Most of us will grasp history and the lessons of history as they have never before been impressed upon us.

We are constantly experimenting with new ways of imparting information. In recent years we have added the large captions which you see over the paintings. For those who want more information, we have added two or three paragraphs next to the most important paintings in the Museum.

We are experimenting with electronic aids, and have invented here ourselves an electronic device known as "Art-A-Fact", which at the push of a button delivers a short discourse on a picture or a group of pictures. These devices have proved very popular, and we intend to develop them further.

And that leads us to other ways of informing people about art. Will these devices ever do away with our teachers? Never. Nothing can take the place of a good teacher inspiring responsive students.

This year we will offer 23 courses in art and music, to about 1,000 regularly-enrolled adult students. We will offer a five-year program of graded Saturday classes in art and music to over 2400 children. Another 57,000 children will visit the Museum with their school classes during the year for art and music talks by our own instructors, which are carefully coordinated with their schoolwork.

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The executives of Toledo's Board of Education have for years endorsed these programs — Philo Dunsmore, Superintendent of Schools; and David R. Pugh, Assistant Superintendent, and their predecessors — have been strong supporters of school participation in the Art Museum programs. The same can be said of Monsignor Shumaker and his staff, of the Catholic schools.

But years ago we learned that there were more school children than we could ever hope to accommodate with our regular instructors; and through a volunteer program, carried on now for 16 years (with the cooperation of the Junior League of Toledo), more than 8,000 additional youngsters, often from the lower-income areas and the out-lying districts, are able to learn something of the cultural heritage here which is theirs.

Yes, volunteers have done much to add to our own program, carried on to the very limits of the income available to us.

The Museum's Need for Income

That brings me to the next point — Income. Where does the money come from to run this institution?

While all this growth that I have been speaking of has taken place, the fact is that the income from the Estate of Mr. Libbey was as much in its first year, 1926, as it is this year. If you set this against the increased cost of living, or against a building three times as big as in 1926, or against the growth of the Museum's activities, you can see why we have problems. Fortunately some additional income has come from other generous donors, estates and trusts. Chief of these was the bequest of Mrs. Libbey which provided needed funds for our work in music and for other purposes, from Mrs. Nettie Poe Ketcham, whose funds are available to our school, from Mrs. C. Lockhart McKelvy, and many other generous gifts.

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But none of these has been sufficient to cover the Museum's growth and expanded needs, and the most promising development in the Museum's recent history has been the establishment by the Trustees in 1953 of a new Endowment Fund. Through the active support of an Endowment Committee, made up of many civic leaders (most of whom are Museum Trustees), over one and a quarter million dollars have been made available. The list of those who contribute (many on an annual basis) is impressive, and I would like to read it to you.

The Anderson Foundation

A. Bentley & Sons Company

Miss Ethel Bentley

Champion Spark Plug Company

City Auto Globe-Wernicke Foundation

Mr. and Mrs. Harry E. Collin

The DeVilbiss Company

Electric Auto-Lite Company

Mr. and Mrs. George M. Jones, Jr.

Mr. and Mrs. Milton Knight

Mr. and Mrs. Robert G. Landers

Mr. and Mrs. James F. Lewis

Libbey-Owens-Ford Glass Company

The C. O. Miniger Memorial Foundation

Owens-Corning Fiberglas Company

Owens-Illinois Glass Company

Mr. and Mrs. George W. Ritter

Mr. and Mrs. Duane Stranahan

Textileather Division, General Tire and Rubber Company

Title Guarantee and Trust Company

Toledo Edison Company

Willys Motors Incorporated

Most of these names appear on the bronze plaque of honor near the Museum entrance, together with others who have given generously in other ways.

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All Gifts Helpful

Now to me, one of the most heartening aspects of this is that more people realize every day that it is not necessary to make a large contribution. Many firms, families and individuals who realize the community value of the Art Museum, and its far-reaching educational programs in art and music, have recently become aware of the Museum's needs for additional funds. Many are taking advantage of the various tax-saving features of giving to non-profit educational institutions, such as the Art Museum. Did you know, for instance, that both the number and value of taxable estates have increased over 300% from 1945 to 1959, and while the number of million dollar estates which in the 1930's amounted to 40% of the total value has now shrunk to about 15%, the number of estates in the \$50,000.00 to \$200,000.00 bracket has risen from about 15% to 40% of the total value. Even more interesting are statistics which show that while through gifts to charities, taxation on large estates is greatly reduced or completely eliminated, many persons of lesser wealth have not yet become aware of the great advantages of tax-free contributions to charitable institutions. Often such a donation is as profitable to the giver as it is to the institution.

One other interesting aspect of the Museum's income today; we now generate ourselves more than one-sixth of our total income from such sources as admission to special exhibitions, concert ticket sales, adult tuition fees, sales of school supplies, books, etc. However, I must emphasize that this one-sixth income comes in on a non-profit basis. All these charges are at cost or below cost. For example, your Peristyle concert tickets cover only the cost of the performers and do not cover the cost of the heat, light, upkeep or administration of the concert facilities. Adult tuition (and there never has been a tuition charged for

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children) covers only a part of the operating costs of our educational facilities. Specific endowments of both Mr. and Mrs. Libbey, of Mrs. Ketcham, and others, help defray these costs and make available to everyone in the community fine concerts and art instruction at below actual costs.

Money, then, is a great problem to us — certainly our most serious problem today. Income and principal have not risen so rapidly as have services and activities and their resulting costs.

Yet I am confident that increased income will come as the community becomes more aware of the need. As yet, only a relative few know of this need.

Other Growth Requirements

What are some of the other problems? I should say that next comes the Museum's surroundings. You have here a beautiful building, built to last for many generations, and a building which Toledo could not afford to replace at today's costs. We are engaged in seeing to it that the new expressway does not come too close to our building. This Museum is not built on pilings. The danger of vibration and damage is great. The danger of an earth slide is even greater. Fortunately we have at this time the support of our county government.

The Toledo Museum is in no sense a part of any government. We receive no tax monies, although many museums (Detroit among them) do. The city and county government, while not a part of the Museum, could do a great deal for it and for Toledo if they gave thought, and later money, to the area surrounding this institution. Our great needs are parks and parking. Our building is much too valuable to destroy and relocate at a more distant location. We have to remain here. Consequently Toledo

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has a problem in re-establishing the area around the Museum. In the early days the Old West End furnished the nucleus of Museum visitors. We still draw large attendance from the old big houses, as we do from the surrounding area back of us, but both are showing the effects of age, and nothing would revive them more than the purchase by our city government of the surrounding area, and its development as a park with well-planned parking areas.

We have other problems such as the spiraling cost of art, and what we are going to do to continue the growth of the Museum's collections. And our facilities. Some of our facilities are taxed to capacity and beyond capacity. Some of the other areas of the building, such as the Peristyle, are not used nearly enough. More room must be found somehow for children, more ways must be found to use the Peristyle, in addition to the Museum's own series of concerts, the concerts given by the Toledo Orchestra, and, this year, the performances by the Toledo Opera Society. They are not enough.

Growth of the Art Collections

Now I have promised to say something about the art, for a museum has three basic functions: to collect art, to preserve art, and to educate. This latter function has been adequately discussed, but I do not think that we are yet fully aware of the extraordinary growth of the Museum's art. The collections of this museum are Toledo's least publicized asset. The story of the growth of the Museum's collections in the past fifteen years since the end of World War II is the greatest untold story in Toledo. We have heard much about the temporary exhibitions, such as those of Berlin, Vienna, Holland, England and France. These exhibitions have brought great masterpieces to Toledo for short periods of time and have received intense publicity

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during their showing. They live on in the memories of those who saw them, but the masterpieces themselves have returned to their homes abroad.

But they are the glittering top of the iceberg, and the real substance of Toledo's growth in international acclaim is the result of the spectacular increase in its own collections of art since World War II. Did you know, for instance, that the Museum's collections of European paintings have just about doubled in the past fifteen years. Fifteen of the thirty-four paintings in the Great Gallery have come since the War. Did you know that entire fields of art have been developed here in the past fifteen years. As a result of careful study of the art market, your Museum embarked in 1947 on a program to acquire French art of the 17th and 18th centuries, when it was more or less out of fashion and therefore low in price. Every picture, with one exception, and every piece of furniture and decorative art in our French galleries have come since World War II. Today we could not afford to pay the prices that these pictures would command in the world's art markets.

We have bought heavily in the field of Dutch 17th century art at the same time, and for the same reason — out of fashion and low prices.

During the same period we have not neglected the field of American art, nor the art of our own time. Exactly 80% of the American paintings now displayed on the walls of our galleries have come since 1946, and two entire galleries of contemporary art have been added.

Ancient art has not been neglected. The large granite figure of an Egyptian king was purchased in 1949, and could not be bought again at any price. Much glass, mostly European and American, has been added to an already world-famous collection.

These are but a few of the great tangible assets here

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not for a month, but forever; for Toledoans, their children and grandchildren to enjoy and learn from.

Art costs money, often a great deal of money. Like the small-town antique dealer who put this sign in his window, "If you think this stuff is junk, just come in and price it." We search constantly for examples of art, trying to buy the best available of any given type. I spend about 40% of my time on the collections. Let me give you one small example of what can happen. This spring in Holland, I was shown a table full of European glass, and included was one large goblet. The glass goblet wasn't very good glass; it was not too clear and had a strange smoky color. Engraved on it, however, were two words, "Frederik, Maryland" and the date 1792. The Dutchman who owned the glass also knew that Maryland was in the United States, but that was all. I asked the price. He named a figure. I said, "We'll take it." He was pleased with his sale for exactly three days — until the Director of the Corning Glass Museum arrived after I had left Holland, asked the man if he knew what he really had. He explained that Frederick County, Maryland, was the home of John Frederick Amelung, the famous 18th century American glassmaker, and this was one of a half-dozen or less presentation goblets made by Amelung which are still preserved today. The piece was worth in America five times what we had paid.

Now what did I have to know to make this single purchase, which paid for my trip many times over? First, I had to know of Amelung and his now destroyed glassworks in Frederick County, Maryland, for this piece was not signed and Frederick, Maryland, was the only written clue. I had to know that Amelung's glass was never very clear because he just didn't know in this new country of ours how to do any better. I had to remember other shapes of

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goblets identical to this in other museum collections — and had to know that my colleague, and friendly competitor, the Director of the Corning Museum of Glass, was in Europe and there was no time to lose. I have deliberately chosen a minor object to discuss, but the difficulties of collecting today are all similar and great.

Whether we are buying a picture, for which we were reported by the Blade a year or so ago to have paid one quarter million dollars (I refer to the Gerard David panels), or whether it is a painting such as one 19th century American picture hanging on our walls today, for which I paid \$175 in England ten years ago, the problems and processes of acquisition are similar.

In my early days at the Art Museum after the war, Blake Godwin used to remind me that Mr. Libbey had indeed been generous in providing money for the building of this Museum; but that as soon as he had built the first part of this building, he bought one picture for which he paid more than the entire cost of the building. I refer to the great Holbein, Portrait of Catherine Howard. Whatever he paid means nothing today, for there is no place on earth where one could acquire such a picture at any price.

The money is not the point, since our collection is not for sale. The value to the community is the point. What Toledoans now have could not be duplicated. But, best of all, the collections will continue to grow, to bring strength, peace of mind, knowledge and a sense of the continuing dignity of man to generations yet unborn.

The Meaning of the Museum

I know it may seem to many of you that I have ranged rather far in this report on the Toledo Museum of Art, but I have presented it as an institution of many facets. Yet no matter how far I have ranged, we still find reflected

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in every facet the heart and basic purpose of this institution, the magnificent collection of works of art it houses.

Everything we have done, everything we do and hope to do here is a reflection of the fundamental task of preserving and strengthening that collection. This collection has meant many things to many people. Men and women by the thousands have enriched their lives from it. Many more thousands have widened and deepened their knowledge from it. To some the collection has been a source of consolation; to others, inspiration. It has been used as a proud cultural monument with which to identify and characterize our city to the world.

However, the assemblage of paintings, sculpture, tapestries, and other works of art that surround us here today, hold still another meaning. It is a meaning that is particularly significant because it can strengthen the lives of every one of us, whether or not we have even the skimpiest knowledge of art. The world lives today under an ominous shadow of peril, crisis succeeds crisis in mounting tension. Even in this bright and happy land we sense the current of despair, the feeling that we are doomed to extinction under the new and terrible weapons in the hands of powerful and amoral forces looming ever larger on the world scene.

But history tells us that disaster is no new experience for mankind. Wars and plagues, floods and famines have swept whole nations from the face of the globe. Again and again over the ages mankind has been enveloped by the darkness of savagery and ignorance. Again and again we find man brutishly destroying beauty and reveling in ugliness. There are so many instances of this that it is understandable that some might feel that perhaps destruction is man's destiny and that we are at the edge of the final catastrophe. Yet history as it is recorded in the collections that surround us

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here tells us something else too, gives us the affirmation of a truth that overrides despair. In our collections, history tells us that despite everything that has happened to man, he remains unconquerable in his yearning to reach the stars. From the darkest of dark ages, the human spirit and the human soul blaze out from paintings, write their message in the towering cathedrals, and take shape in the sculpture of antiquity.

In the history of man as recorded in his works of art, we can see from the perspective of the ages that although man periodically has foundered and sunk into bogs, his course overall has been upward. This brings me to the one thing every one of us can take from the magnificent collection of The Toledo Museum of Art. That thing is faith.

